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Helping People Help the Land...

SUBJECT: Activities Report, April 1 – June 1, 2006

DATE: June 7, 2006

TO: Rhode Island Conservation Partnership

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT

EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (ERICD), by Michael Merrill, Acting District Conservationist

Of the 36 EQIP and 13 WHIP applications, the staff finalized and approved 17 EQIP and 5 WHIP contracts. Some of the EQIP applicants deferred, withdrew, or did not follow through with the required documentation for their application during the planning process. The total obligations for 2006 contracts totaled \$1,237,498 and for WHIP totaled \$231,667. The farm based projects include improving irrigation efficiency, deer fencing, nutrient management and barnyard manure management projects.

Multiple cultural resource reviews are going on for projects involving potential ground disturbing activities. For example, pipeline projects and irrigation lines are being reviewed with NRCS and the Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL).

Approximately 18 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands of applicants that have not previously participated with USDA Programs or were farming new lands.

During this quarter, the staff has provided assistance to address the requests of approximately 5 clients that were eligible and interested to install all those practices that were eligible for the additional 15% increase in re-imbursement. Some of these have been completed and some are well on their way to completing the projects.

The staff is working to clean up the contracts to address 'Backlogged' projects, those practices/projects that were scheduled to be implemented prior to this year, but have not. In the Eastern District, 86 practices were considered backlogged in March. We have modified or certified approximately 51% of these since that time. In June we will make this a priority to conduct Status Reviews to get all contract up to date.

NORTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (NRICD), by Michael Merrill, District Conservationist

Of the 29 EQIP and 19 WHIP applications, the staff finalized and approved 13 EQIP and 11 WHIP contracts. Some of the EQIP applicants deferred, withdrew, or did not follow through with the required documentation for their application during the planning

process. The total obligations for 2006 contracts totaled \$697,318 and for WHIP totaled \$1,175,760. The wildlife projects ranged from early successional upland habitats to multiple fish passage and wetland restoration projects. The farm based projects include improving irrigation efficiency, deer fencing, nutrient management and barnyard manure management projects.

Seven applicants for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) were eligible for the program. Five of these were in Category A and two in Category B.

Multiple cultural resource reviews are going on for projects involving potential ground disturbing activities. For example, pipeline projects and fish passage projects are being reviewed with NRCS and the Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL).

Several Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands of applicants that have not previously participated with USDA Programs.

During this quarter, the staff has provided assistance to address the requests of approximately 9 clients that were eligible and interested to install all those practices that were eligible for the additional 15% increase in re-imbursement. Many of these have been completed and some are well on their way to completing the projects.

For the fish passage projects along the Woonasquatucket, NRCS had a multi-department meeting with DEM to discuss coordination of permits for the projects. These meetings included staff from water quality, wetlands and solid waste, as well as the director of DEM.

A meeting on the Blackstone fish passage restoration projects was held with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), legislator's staff, Army Corps, DEM, Save the Bay, USFWS, Blackstone Watershed Council and others. This meeting was held to coordinate further feasibility studies and discuss funding through Army Corps of Engineers.

The staff is working to clean up the contracts to address 'Backlogged' projects, those practices/projects that were scheduled to be implemented prior to this year, but have not. In the Northern District, 91 practices were considered backlogged in March. We have modified or certified approximately 20% of these since that time. In June we will make this a priority to conduct Status Reviews to get all contract up to date.

SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SRICD), by Michael Kenyon, District Conservationist

The staff continued their efforts in finalizing the FY06 EQIP and WHIP applications. Of the 49 EQIP applications and 12 WHIP applications, 25 EQIP applications and 12 WHIP applications were approved for funding. Contracts were drafted and review with the applicants. Two of the draft EQIP contracts were later not signed by the clients due to a

change in their priorities. Over \$1.5 million was obligated for EQIP and WHIP contracts in the southern district.

This year's clients began implementation of their plan and contract significantly earlier than previous year clients, which resulted in several cultural resource reviews to be completed on sites where this prompt implementation occurred.

Several Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands of applicants that have not previously participated with USDA Programs.

During the last couple of months, the staff continued to address the requests of those clients that were interested in the Energy Incentive effort to install those practices that were eligible for the additional 15% increase in re-imbursement. Engineering was finalized for those individuals and reviewed with them in order for them to continue with the process of getting their practices installed by the June 30th deadline.

Follow-up continued on previous year contracts despite the increased workload due to this year's program applications. Activity included certification on completed practices, such as fence, prescribed grazing, pond, and nutrient management; status reviews and modifications; and beginning the process for contract terminations. Other activity included completing a baseline inventory as part of the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). The inventory was completed and the closing on the easement followed. Approximately 39 acres in the town of South Kingstown were included within the easement. Previous year AMA, SWCA, and WRP contracts were also recipients of follow-up, while 8 individuals received general conservation technical assistance.

Other noteworthy activities that occurred over the last couple of months are the coordination with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and the USDA Plant Material Center to look into the availability of various plants that have significant tribal uses and the coordination of the University of Rhode Island and the Land Conservancy of North Kingstown in implementing biological control of Purple loosestrife.

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ETVP), by Jeanne Comerford, Public Affairs Specialist

ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist

Economics: State economist reviewed production and income data for 84 applicants to determine their eligibility for the EQIP Farm Program. Cost data for projects completed in the past fiscal year are being entered into a spreadsheet in preparation to update the cost list for practices that are implemented through our farm programs.

NEPA: NRCS is working with several partners to investigate alternatives to restore fish passage in the Pawtucket River in the vicinity of the Pawtucket Dam. NRCS has taken the lead in

providing a cultural resource review of all the proposed alternatives to insure that cultural resources are considered and protected throughout the project. Technical staff have participated in both a stakeholder meeting and a public meeting regarding the restoration of fish passage in the Pawtucket River. The other partners for this project include: Pawtucket River Authority and Watershed Council; Narragansett Bay Estuary Program; Save The Bay; R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council; R.I. Corporate Wetlands Partnership; R.I. Department of Environmental Management; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Conservation Practice Standards::

NRCS staff has been asked by URI Cooperative Extension Service (CES) through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to work jointly on interim standards in the state where ever possible. Currently CES is reviewing that list of current and potential interim standards where joint efforts will be of benefit as well as those current conservation practice standards that are being reviewed and possibly updated with assistance by other Departments at URI.

Technical staff is currently reviewing the following national standards for use in Rhode Island:

- Irrigation Tail Water Recovery (Code 447)
- Saline and Sodic Soil Management(Code 610)

Annual reports have been submitted for the interim standards:

- Transition to Organic Ag (Cose789)
- Shellfish Aquaculture Management (Code 706)

National Standards that are up for review by State in the past three months include:

- Fish Passage (Code 396 d1)
- Fishpond Management (Code 399 d1)
- 330d2 - Contour Farming (Code 330 d2)
- 332d2 - Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332 d2)
- 393d1 - Filter Strip - (Code 393 d1)
- 395d2 - Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (Code 330 d2)
- 614d3 - Watering Facility (Code 614d3)
- 441d2 - Irrigation System, Microirrigation (Code 441d2)

If you have any questions on these and other Conservation Practice Standards, please direct them to J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist, 401-822-8814

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by Andrew Lipsky, State Biologist

On May 17, 2006 a workshop was held by NRCS for the 2006 EQIP funded Shellfish growers. NRCS staff, Dale Leavitt, Roger Williams University, Dave Bengtson, University of Rhode Island, presented the growers with the necessary worksheets, documentation, and details for a number of the conservation practice components that are part of the USDA EQIP Shellfish Management Conservation Plans. Nine of the eleven funded growers were present for the meeting. The workshop turned out to be an overwhelming success in order to work out the kinks in this brand new initiative for Rhode Island growers.

ENGINEERING, by Frank Vogel, Assistant State Engineer

Pocasset Floodplain Management Study (FPMS): Final draft of the Hydrology and Hydraulics report was presented to the CT State Conservation Engineer for review. Comments have been received back and are in the process of being incorporated. The engineering consultant firm GZA has begun development of the preliminary designs and analysis for selected alternative solution options. The Flood Plain Management Study is scheduled for completion and publication by September 30 2006.

Engineering Services: The NRCS source selection board has chosen two firms (EA Associates from Warwick, RI and Fuss and O'Neill from Providence, RI) to perform various natural resource projects throughout the state of Rhode Island on an as-needed task order basis. The scope of services includes engineering planning, survey, design and construction oversight.

GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (GLCI), by Michael Merrill

The earmark report was compiled and sent to the national office. The cooperative agreement with the Eastern Conservation District work is complete and we will close out the agreement soon. The East National Technology Support Center hosted a teleconference for the East Region NRCS Grazing Specialists on May 30th. The ENTSC grazing specialist is scheduling visits to each state this summer and hopes to visit RI along with CT and MA in August.

FARM BILL PROGRAMS, by Vicky Drew and Joe Bachand

Conservation Security Program (CSP):

The sign-up for the Conservation Security Program was held through March 31. RI received a number of applications for the program, which was only offered in the Woonasquatucket, Moshassuck, and Pawtucket River watersheds. Vicky Drew and Mike Merrill processed all applications, which included a two to three hour interview with each applicant. Tim Pindell offered assistance with calculating the Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) for each applicant, which must be a positive number to meet minimum eligibility criteria. The National Office makes final selection based on funds available. We are still awaiting the announcement of applications selected for funding, which should be imminent.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

All field staff worked diligently to meet the ranking deadline in early March, and the Contract Development deadline of June 1st. Over 100 applications were received and processed. Fifty-five contracts were developed and approved, obligating \$3,296,825.

Rhode Island received 14 applications for the first ever Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, which is funded through EQIP. Seven applications were approved for funding for a total of approximately \$375,000 (final revisions to some budgets are still pending). Announcement of those grants selected for funding will be released shortly.

Two agreements were amended using EQIP funds to expand on work already underway:

- 1) Pest Management plan development – Cooperative Agreement with the University of RI Plant Sciences Department was amended to add five new farms to the list of farmers participating in developing and following pest management on their property. Under this agreement, Heather Faubert, URI CE, is providing direct technical assistance to 19 farms across the state.
- 2) Manure inventory in the Saugatuck and Pawcatuck watersheds – Contribution Agreement with the Southern RI Conservation District was amended to add funds and expand services to be provided. Once completed, both NRCS and RIDEM will have a complete list of all livestock producers in each watershed, as well as a rough estimate of phosphorus loading needed to determine if an overproduction of phosphorus exists in the watershed. This project is jointly sponsored by NRCS and RIDEM and is providing needed information to the State to prepare for avian influenza.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP):

The third and largest RI GRP easement was purchased on May 25th from James and Susan Bowers and the Bowers Family Irrevocable Trust for 39 acres in South Kingstown. This land will forever remain grassland, and is permanently protected from development and conversion to other non-grassland agricultural uses. The easement was purchased for \$1.298 million. In addition to the GRP easement, the Town of South Kingstown and the South Kingstown Land Trust purchased a conservation easement on the remaining 17 wooded acres on the farm.

In preparation for the closing, significant staff time was spent on acquiring title review, appraisal, survey and baseline inventory of the farm. All legal work is coordinated with both a local attorney under contract and the USDA's Office of General Counsel.

Farm and Ranch land Protection Program (FRPP):

The Announcement for Program Funding was released in March with an application deadline of May 11th. Eleven applications were received from six entities requesting over \$6,000,000 in FRPP funds. Ranking of the applications is scheduled for June 8th with funding decisions to follow shortly thereafter.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP):

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS, by Jeanne Comerford)

Outreach Events Attendees

April 5, Enviorthon Workshop, Soils and Aquatics	30
April 7-8, Wood users conference, CCRI, with RC&D	400
April 8, RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission annual conference, Andy presented	200
April 5, Woonsocket Sportsmen Assoc meeting, talk about our programs	35
April 8, Forestry & Wood Expo, Kate gave a talk	12

April 14, Pawtucket River Council meeting, Reena gave a talk	17
April 11, RI Land Trust, Riparian buffer restoration talk	50
April 18, Salt Water Anglers, talk on Anadromous fish restoration	12
April 24-28, Wetland delineation training, Jim held training	35
May 17, Ag Day at the state house	200
May 18, RI Enviorthon	100
June 2, North Kingstown High School, monitoring	30

OPERATIONS, by Jackie Pashnik

Personnel Actions:

- ♦ Pat Cotter, Secretary, returned to work and will be working 3 hours per day.
- ♦ Ben Tavares was hired for the summer as a Civil Engineering Technician, effective 5/17/06.
- ♦ Meaghan Shaffer was hired for the summer as a Biologist, effective 5/22/06.
- ♦ Meahan Walter, accepted the Civil Engineering vacancy and will start work on 6/26/06.
- ♦ John Richard was appointed a Soil Conservationist under the Career Intern Program effective 6/11/2006
- ♦ After a disappointing response, the Supervisory Soil Conservationist position was cancelled. Instead, we are exploring options to reorganize staff to cover those responsibilities.

Performance Goals:

Performance Summary Status through June 30, 2005	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
CNMP Applied (No.)	10	2	20
CNMP Written (No.)	9	1	11
Conservation Plans for Cropland Written (Ac.)	1,000	875	88
Conservation Plans for Grazing Land Written (Ac.)	400	431	108
Farmland and Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.)	158	31	19
Grazing land with Conservation Applied to Protect the Resource Base (Ac.)	185	409	221
Irrigation Efficiency Improved (Ac-Ft)	15	6	38
Local Businesses Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	4		
Local Jobs Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	8		

Non-federal Land Managed for the Protection and Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Ac.)	7,430	9,258	125
Non-federal Land Treated for Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Ac.)	535	8,753	61
Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses (Ac.)	89		
Reduction in the Acreage of Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.)	100		
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	310	41	13
Soil Surveys Mapped or Updated (Ac.)	1,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Ac.)	79,000	400	1
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (No.)	9		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Flood Prevention or Mitigation (No.)	3		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Water Conservation and Water Supply (No.)	1		
Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced (Ac.)	130	125	96
Wetlands Protected by 30-year or Permanent Easements (Ac.)	29		

Training, Conferences, and Meetings Attended

- ♦ Pindell, National Agronomy Meeting in Auburn, Alabama. Reviewed current research and technology improvements focused on conservation cropping systems, and the effects on soil quality, primarily soil carbon and improved aggregate stability. These conservation systems include advances in plant materials, cover crops (small grains, legumes) emphasizing large volumes of biomass and plant residues, improved tillage equipment and precision agriculture, nutrient and pest management, and diverse cropping systems – crop rotations that include sod in the rotation – making all the above systems work better.
- ♦ GSA Expo, Moore and Pashnik, San Antonio, Texas
- ♦ Earth Team Volunteers Coordinators' meeting and training, Phoenix, AZ, Comerford

RI RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D), by Chris Modisette, RC&D Coordinator

I. Highlights

RI Farm Bureau

Al Bettencourt has invited RC&D to participate in the next taping of their TV show which is aired on Cox Cable. The taping will take place at the Cox Cable TV studio on June 28 at 6:00 pm in Johnston. The TV show will be about Rhody Warm (the wool program), RI Raised Meat Cooperative, and the Rhody Warm project. They will devote about 12-14 minutes to each of the above topics.

Grow Smart Rhode Island - Power of Place Summit

On behalf of the RC&D Council I spoke at the Grow Smart Rhode Island Power of Place Summit, held on May, 12, 2006 as part of a panel that dealt with the issue of “**The Environmental & Open Space Impacts of Sprawl**”. Other panel participants included Chet Arnold, NEMO Program Director, UCONN, Peter August, URI Coastal Institute, Kathleen Wainwright, Director for Conservation Programs, the Nature Conservancy, W. Michael Sullivan, Director of RIDEM who moderated the panel. Approximately 60 people attended the session.

Overall attendance at the summit approached 500 people, and was the largest such policy gathering of opinion leaders, state and local officials, citizens and development professionals to consider how Rhode Islanders can better manage the growth of vibrant, prosperous and livable communities today and for future generations. The summit was meant to highlight Land-Use 2025 from the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program.

RI Ag Days

RC&D shared a display with RI Rural Development Council at RI Ag Day held at the State House on May 17, 2006. Gerry Bertrand and Chris Modisette staffed the display.

RI Envirothon

The RC&D Council was sponsor of the 2006 RI Envirothon Competition. Ten (10) teams from four (4) schools with over 50 students participated in this year's competition. The overall team winner was from a team from Narragansett High School. Gerry Bertrand, Bev Migliore and Chris Modisette participated as judges for the competition. This year's competition was hosted by the Apeiron Foundation on May 18, 2006

RC&D Receives USDA-NRCS CIG Grant: RI Coverts Project

The RI Resource Conservation & Development Area (RIRC&D) was notified that it will be receiving Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to establish the Coverts project in Rhode Island. RI RC&D will capitalize on the availability of expertise from UCONN Cooperative Extension as well as the interest by our partners to establish this as a viable wildlife habitat improvement opportunity for Rhode Island's woodland owners.

II. PROJECTS

Rural Fire Protection

1. Designed and produced 200 Dry Hydrant Guidance Manuals with the assistance of RIDEM-Divisions of Forest Environment and Freshwater Wetlands

2. Solicited Requests for Area (Dry-hydrant) Plans
3. Received requests for eight (8) plans from Little Compton (2), Block Island (2), western Coventry (2), and West Greenwich (1-2)
4. Held two (2) meetings with Cathy Sparks (RIDFE) to identify status of Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants, availability of funds for FY 2006, program timelines, general coordination of the program between RC&D and RIDFE and plans to meet with the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs - Forest Fire Advisory Committee and RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment.
5. Held discussions with Cathy Sparks about role of RC&D in future coordination and administration of Volunteer Fire Assistance grants.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

RI RC&D assists the RIDEM – Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) with the implementation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) by administering cost-share payments to eligible forest landowners for completed FLEP practices as approved by RIDFE.

The purpose of the FLEP is to provide a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

In April/May 2006 six (6) landowners owning a total of 441 acres of forestland received \$3,208 of cost-share assistance for the preparation of forest stewardship plans. To date in FY 2006 the program has enrolled 1,063.5 acres of forestland involving 13 forest landowners who received \$7,752 of cost-share assistance.

During the same period ten (10) new applications for cost-share assistance were approved covering 738 acres of forestland.

Rhode Island Stream Continuity Project (Assist Trout Unlimited and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association to assess and improve stream continuity in the 33,750 acre Upper Wood River Watershed)

1. Inventoried 140 sites to date
2. NRCS hired intern Meaghan Schaffer from the URI Department of Natural Resources Science to work on this project during the summer of 2006. She will pick-up where Katie Weiss left off.
3. A meeting was held on May 31, 2006 to discuss the update of the project and to create tasks which need to be completed. The goal of the project is for NRCS to meet with e partners in August and to show collected and analyzed data with potential restoration sites identified. A synthesized Wood River Watershed plan will be completed by August-September 2006.

RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual (Update the RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual to reduce non-point source pollution and improve knowledge of soil erosion and sediment control practices within the RI RC&D Area)

1. A letter requesting use of CT's materials has been forwarded to Marla Butz at CTDEP. We are awaiting a reply.

Forestry Special Projects Technical Assistance to the Narragansett Indian Tribe

- 1. Restoration of Black Ash, American chestnut and Walnut species**

We are still awaiting final word on the RBEG proposal we submitted to USDA Rural Development for \$25,000 to assist with a feasibility analysis for this project; and

2. Ethno-Botany Project & Workshop

RC&D has been requested to assist with the coordination of an entho-botany workshop and project by the Southern Rhode island Conservation District (SRICD) and USDA-NRCS.

Ethnobotany is the study of the use of plants by people. Important concepts in ethnobotany today also include economic botany, sustainable harvesting (ethical wild crafting), ethics and intellectual property rights, and as a representational voice for the cultures where the field work is done. As a field of research and study, ethnobotany is an interdisciplinary approach using botany, anthropology, history, chemistry, and many others. Along with an increasing awareness of the value of what is often rapidly-disappearing indigenous or traditional knowledge of the uses of plants, there is an increasing awareness of the need by those who wish to obtain ethnobotanical data from cultures other than their own to take account of 'indigenous property rights' (IPR), and to respect the 'ownership' of such cultural or traditional knowledge.

The SRICD, working with the Rhode Island Indian Council, has made arrangements to bring Mr. Calvin D. Weatherwax to Rhode Island to conduct both classroom and field training sessions in this subject during the week of June 12 -16, 2006. Mr. Weatherwax is the spokesman for Kaa Mo Taan (Circle of Protection) for the Blackfeet Nation. He is also the Professional Development Coordinator for the Blackfeet Community College Rural Systemic Initiative, established and funded and by the National Science Foundation. This project focuses on developing and sustaining a technological competent workforce (science, math, technology) within the context of the Blackfeet culture.

“Rhody Warm” - Surplus Wool Project

- We are awaiting final notification on USDA Rural Development RBEG grant for \$25,000 to assist with a feasibility analysis for this project.
- We have had two (2) meetings with the RI Sheep Cooperative to finalize plans for wool collection.
- The date for wool collection is Saturday, June 17, 2006 at the Urban Edge farm in Cranston, RI
- A mailing announcing the collection date was prepared and mailed to approximately 50 wool producers
- We are finalizing the contract with the textile Consultant for manufacturing of the blankets; and
- Al Bettencourt has invited RC&D to participate in the next taping of their TV show which is aired on Cox Cable. The taping will take place at the Cox Cable TV studio on June 28 at 6:00 pm in Johnston. The TV show will be about Rhody Warm (the wool program), RI Raised Meat Cooperative, and the Rhody Warm project.

2006 Forestry & Wood Expo

RI RC&D partnered with the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment, RI Rural Development Council, Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. and the RI Tree Farm Committee to sponsor the first annual Forestry & Wood Expo. The expo provided a series of seminars, workshops as well as business luncheon to highlight the contribution of the forestry and wood products to Rhode Island's economy. The

expo served as the kick-off event to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of forestry in Rhode Island.

Follow-up activities include:

- Preparation and distribution of a post-expo news release;
- Follow-up meeting to evaluate expo and discussion future events
- Preparation and distribution of an event evaluation to solicit feedback from sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, etc.

RI Coverts Project

The Coverts Project is a special educational program developed jointly by Cooperative Extension Systems in Connecticut and Vermont and the Ruffed Grouse Society in 1983. Since then it has expanded to eleven (11) other states across the northeastern U.S. with the exception of the state of Rhode Island.

The Coverts Project has been reaching out to individual woodland owners and teaching them how sound management practices can make wildlife healthier, more diverse, and more abundant.

Currently this program does not exist in Rhode Island. The RI Resource Conservation & Development Area (RIRC&D) is working with the RI Division of Fish & Wildlife and Forest Environment, RIFCO, Tree Farm, Ruffed Grouse Society and URI to establish the Coverts project in Rhode Island. RI RC&D will capitalize on the availability of expertise from UCONN Cooperative Extension as well as the interest by our partners to establish this as a viable wildlife habitat improvement opportunity for Rhode Island's woodland owners.

The Council has received up to a three (3) year grant through the NRCS CIG (Conservation Innovation Grant) Program to fund the start-up of this project in RI. Grant funding totals \$25,000 per year.

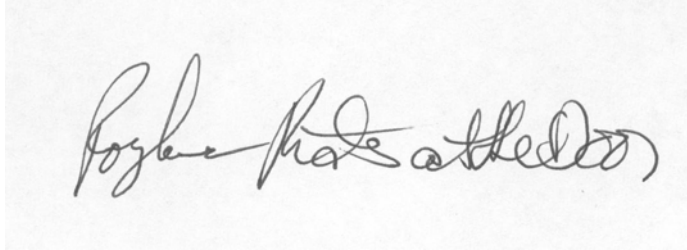
SOILS PROGRAM, by Jim Turenne

Map Coast: The CESU agreement for the MapCoast earmark funding has been completed, the agreement is awaiting final approval and signatures. Once the agreement is signed work will begin in Quonochontaug Pond, Wickford Harbor, and areas of Narragansett Bay.

Soil Resource Assistance: On-site soil evaluations were conducted on 4 farms for hydric soil delineations, FRPP evaluations, and logging soil conditions for engineering designs. The RI soil staff assisted with teaching the Regulatory IV training session for delineating wetlands using the 1987 USACOE manual. Thirty people were trained during the week-long session.

Cooperative Soil Survey Updates: A meeting with the MO-12 Board of Directors was held to discuss the MLRA reorganization for the National Cooperative Soil Survey. Michael Golden, Director of the Soil Survey Division attended the meeting and provided the guidelines for the restructuring. Since all of Rhode Island is located within MLRA 144A and 149B, future soil survey activity for the state will be conducted by the MMA office in Windsor, CT. The National Cooperative Soil Survey conference was held in Boredentown, NJ during the week of May 22. A major topic of the meeting was the discussion on subaqueous soils. There was overwhelming support for the proposed center of excellence in subaqueous soils to be located in Rhode Island.

This is the activities report for NRCS Rhode Island. If you have any questions or need further information, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roylene Rides at the Door". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ROYLENE RIDES AT THE DOOR
State Conservationist